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**THE GARDEN STATE—START OF A
SERIES ON THE HIGHLY DIVERSIFIED
AGRICULTURE OF NEW JERSEY BY
JOHN T. CUNNINGHAM . . . Page 4**

FARMING

WE call New Jersey "The Garden State," half in hesitancy, half in pride. The hesitancy comes for many in not knowing for sure why "Garden" continues meaningful in a state whose every corner seems stuffed with bustling industry; the pride comes for those who have knowledge of prosperous farms set on the hills of north Jersey or on the level acres of south Jersey.

Not that "Garden State" is an easy nickname to sell. The casual rider on a train bound from New York to Philadelphia finds "Garden State" difficult to understand at best, and, in the industrial sights and smells which beset him, might even find the name ridiculous. "Where are the gardens," he asks in all justice, "over beyond the billboards and just a piece past the smokestacks?"

Whoever seeks to find the elements of the Garden State tradition might well start with the "Great Seal of the State of New Jersey." Centered on the seal is a shield bearing three plows, atop which is a horse's head (meaning farming, not race tracks,

This is the first in a series of articles on New Jersey's highly diversified agriculture, vigorous and growing despite the constant inroads of industrial and residential development. Future articles will deal with the rise and growth of farming in the Garden State, dealing first with important farm products, then treating the vital forces affecting the farmer in New Jersey.

since the seal was adopted in 1776). To the left of the shield is the goddess Ceres, whose overflowing cornucopia is the very emblem of farming.

YET a 1776 seal is scarcely enough to make New Jersey the "Garden State" in 1955. This materialistic age requires more than sentimental antiquity; it requires facts, statistics, proof.

Statistics show that New Jersey still has 25,000 farms, whose owners each year produce between 350 and 400 million dollars' worth of everything from eggs to tomatoes, from milk to blueberries, from orchids to sweet potatoes. Behind this annual productivity there is solidity; more than 800 million dollars is invested in New Jersey farm land, buildings, livestock and machinery.

Weigh this against the five billion dollars in value of goods manufactured annually in New Jersey and "Garden State" might appear tarnished. Weigh further—the startling fact is that less than 1 per cent of all



The
GARDEN STATE

MAP BY STAFF ARTIST CHARLES ADAMO

IN NEW JERSEY

By JOHN T. CUNNINGHAM

state acreage is occupied by industry; more than 36 per cent is in farms.

AGRICULTURE has importance in every one of New Jersey's counties, and in well over half of the counties it is the supreme way of life. Even highly urban counties like Essex, Bergen, Union and Passaic have well-developed farm patterns stubbornly persisting despite ever-pressing demands for land from industries and home developers. Politically, the farm counties dominate the State Senate in Trenton, as any urban legislator can attest.

In setting New Jersey's agriculture against a national pattern, bear in mind that this state is fourth smallest in the United States—so small that some individual counties of the Far West have more farm acreage than all New Jersey! Unlike the great land areas of the West, where farmers graze beef cattle or plant wheat and grow rich by the grace of God and a government subsidy, the New Jersey farm averages only 70 acres.

Yet within this tiny state there is unmatched agricultural variation. Farming in New Jersey means 90,000 dairy cows grazing on the rugged hillsides of Sussex, Warren and Hunterdon counties. It means hundreds of tons of celery and lettuce and onions in the black muck lands of Great Meadows and Paramus. It means incredible varieties and tonnages of vegetables in the market gardens of Essex, Bergen and Passaic. Essex alone plants and reaps 59 different vegetables to meet the varied tastes of the mixed population of races and nationalities who live in the New York metropolitan area.

FARMING in New Jersey means dairy cows and chickens mingling on the gentle slopes of Hunterdon, white potato fields set side by side with fruit trees and chickens in Monmouth. It means a poultry enterprise which has tripled in size in the past decade in Monmouth, Ocean, Atlantic and Cumberland counties.

Farming in New Jersey means more than 50,000 acres of cropland in Cumberland, Cape May, Atlantic and Salem counties devoted to raising vegetables for mighty Seabrook Farms, largest mechanized farm in all America. It means millions of bushels of tomatoes picked annually for Campbell Soup Co. in Camden and for catsup and chili sauce producers in Swedesboro, Bridgeton, Salem and other South Jersey towns. It means the apple and peach orchards and the sweet corn

fields of Burlington; the sweet potatoes and tomatoes of Gloucester, and the greenhouses of Union, Bergen and Morris.

Farming in New Jersey means all these things and more—orchids in Middlesex, roses in Madison, carnations in Clifton, azaleas in East Rutherford; cranberries and blueberries plucked from once-worthless South Jersey boglands, and rapidly expanding nurseries whose prosperity is keyed to the state's home building activity. New Jersey farming also means hay and grains and beef cattle and pigs and seeds and honey, all of significant enough size to catch the census taker's pencil.

THESE are not just mere words. Look at dollar values for 1953: Eggs, 130 million dollars; milk, 65 million; vegetables, 60 million; poultry (other than eggs), 37 million; nursery and greenhouse products, 27 million; grains, 24 million; meat animals, 18 million; hay, \$16,500,000; tree fruits, 10 million; berries, 7 million, and white potatoes, \$5,500,000.

It is important to note that many of these leading commodities of today had little or no significance in New Jersey a century ago; some, like chickens and nursery products, had only moderate value as recently as 40 years ago. That points up the nimbleness of the state's farmers, their ability to keep abreast of modern trends.

This progressiveness is forced upon the New Jersey farmer, who has seen his available farm acreage shrink more than a million acres within the state since 1900. The last three decades have seen an accelerated trend toward using farmland for industrial sites, residential building, reservoirs, turnpikes and traffic circles. More than 90,000 acres in north Jersey changed from farms to real estate developments between 1945 and 1950.

THE upshot has been to make the New Jersey farmer as skilled as any in the world, since his production has increased as rapidly as his land has decreased. Occupying the highest priced farm land in the United States, the New Jersey farmer stays in business only by constantly pushing up production—per cow, per hen, per acre, per tree, per bush, per man hour—and by improving his marketing skills. Thus does his land produce the highest gross farm income per acre in the nation.

Lest there be any question about pressure on the farmer in urban areas,

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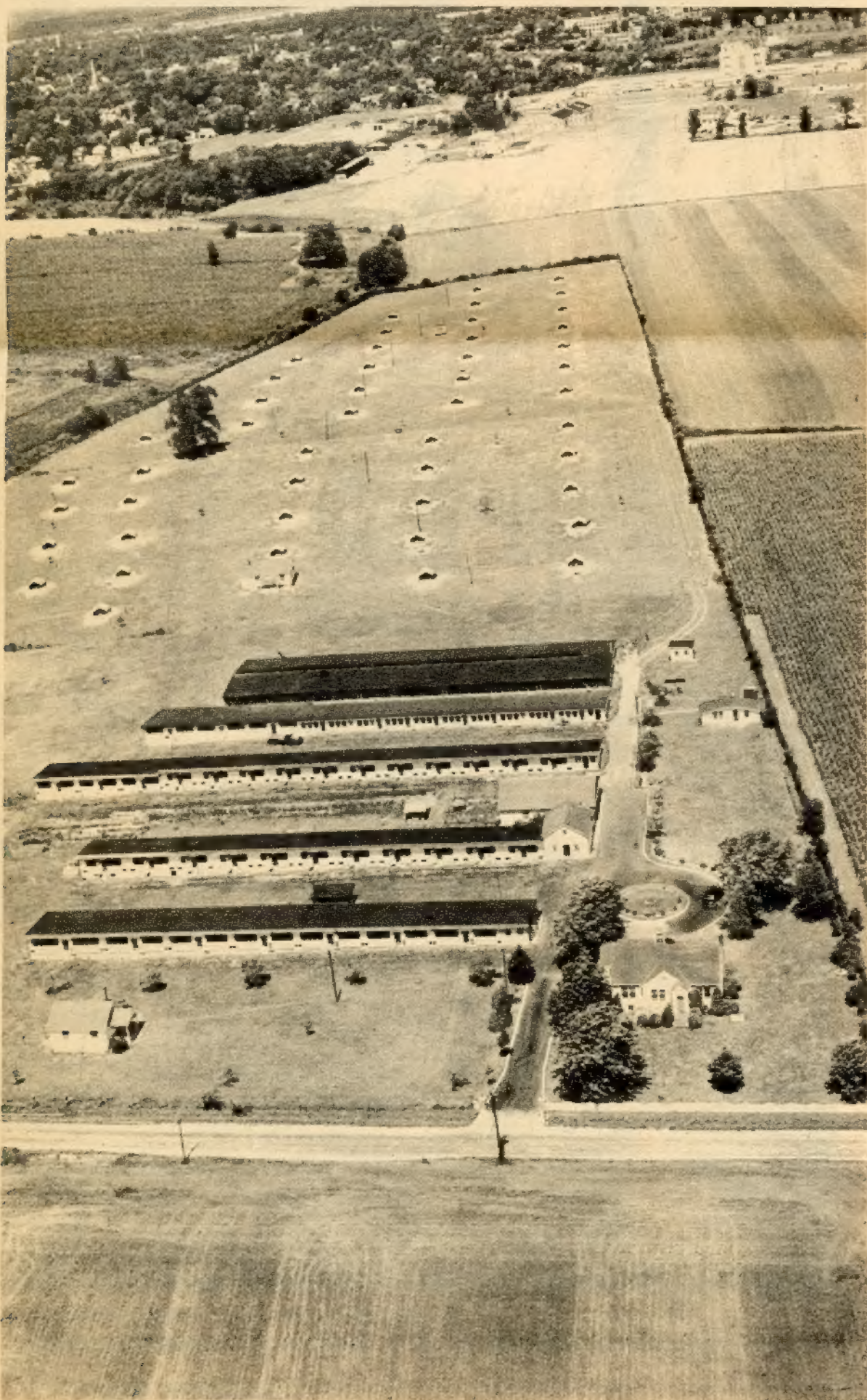
Despite Its Size — Fourth Smallest in the Nation—the Garden State Has an Unmatched Agricultural Variety Including the Annual Marketing of Three Billion Eggs and 40 Million Chicks, Harvesting Over a Billion Pounds of Vegetables from Truck Farms and Producing 600 Million Quarts of Milk



From producer to consumer—Garden State farm and orchard products are displayed on sidewalk stand of South Jersey "vegetable store."



Nurserymen digging out spreading Japanese yews at a Mercer County nursery, one of the state's fastest growing agricultural enterprises due to mushrooming housing developments and nearness of cities. BELOW: A typical chicken "ranch" in Monmouth County, which ranks third nationally among all counties in value of egg sales. Combination of poultry and eggs is state's biggest farming commodity.



FARMING IN NEW JERSEY

(Continued from Preceding Page)

consider the fact that scores of farmers in Bergen, Essex and Union counties have been offered \$5,000 to \$10,000 and more per acre for their holdings. It is a fact that two parcels of Union County farm land along Route 22 have brought bids as high as \$25,000 per acre. Some farmers have succumbed to the lure of quick money, but, surprisingly in an era when money talks, many have stubbornly refused to leave their land and the land of their fathers.

Obviously a man who stays on land worth \$10,000 an acre needs more than sentiment, more than love of the soil, to keep him going. To justify his clinging to the land he must farm with his brains more than his callouses—and he must hit nearby markets first with the most and the best. He must conquer disease, must enrich the earth, must buy machinery, must fight drought with irrigation.

The New Jersey farmer pays heed when the College of Agriculture at Rutgers University seeks to teach him through bulletins from New Brunswick or through first-hand aid proffered by agricultural agents located in the county courthouses. He obeys willingly, in all but a handful of instances, when the State Department of Agriculture lays down regulations or he cooperates when the department sets up disease-control programs for his benefit. He sends for federal literature, reads a variety of farm magazines, meets with fellow farmers to discuss problems. He must—and does—stay up to the minute.

GOOD farm practices are a thing of the 20th century, since most early farmers in New Jersey abused rather than used the land. They inherited a veritable garden—"The Garden of the World," according to a description in an atlas published in Scotland in 1684. By Revolutionary War time both Colonial and British armies fed off New Jersey soil much of the time, either

by force of arms or by force of the shilling.

Later, Hunterdon County wheat, Sussex County beef, Bergen County cabbages and strawberries and Essex County apples and vegetables rolled to feed the hungry in New York City and to feed the former farmers gone to spin the shuttles and machines in industrial Paterson and Newark. South Jersey vegetables and its famed oversized cattle and pigs went over the Camden ferries to Philadelphia markets in mounting quantities.

Ah yes, soil so excellent, soil so fertile—and farm habits so poor that by 1830 large areas of New Jersey farm land lay wretched and ruined. Many farm families of Salem and Cumberland counties joined their upstate brethren from Hunterdon and Warren as they trekked westward to seek greener pastures to be ruined by poor husbandry.

VOICES cried out against the waste, and between 1830 and 1870 farmers began to spread on their land limestone from northwest Jersey and green sand marl from south Jersey. They added the wonderful new superphosphate fertilizer produced by James J. Mapes in Newark in the 1850s—the nation's first real chemical fertilizer. The land grew rich and green again, just in time to meet the challenge flung by the railroads chugging over the pasturelands.

Railroads swept the beef cattle and sheep from the hills of Sussex, Warren and Hunterdon and off to western ranges, made Hunterdon County wheat plantings insignificant in contrast with the billowing fields of Kansas. Still, the rails also brought the Philadelphia and New York markets ever closer to the fields; "pea trains" hauled vast quantities of south Jersey vegetables to market and "peach trains" took fruit from Hunterdon County's two million peach trees to markets all over the East.

Those two million Hunterdon

(Continued on Page 10)

**COVER
PHOTO**

In Sussex a combine sweeps through field of oats, one of Garden State grains with a dollar value of 24 million. Threshing of oats alone is over one million bushels annually in Jersey.

AGRICULTURE IN JERSEY



One of the state's important dairy sections is Sussex County, where this Frankford Township farm is located.

COLOR PHOTOS BY PORTER DORER

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County peach trees illustrate well the disaster which could overtake the farmer in the relatively unscientific farming days of the late 19th century. San Jose scale cut cruelly into all peach trees in the middle 1890s, and within five years all except a few trees had been put to the ax. Hunterdon County farmers turned to dairy cows and chickens to build a new prosperity.

NEW products and new methods are

the industrial corridor between New York and Philadelphia. That is particularly true of 20th century farming in New Jersey. Chickens and eggs, scarcely more than a pin-money item for the farmer's wife 50 years ago, are today the state's biggest single agricultural commodities. Cultivated blueberries have come from zero acres in 1925 to 5,000 acres in 1955. Sweet potato harvests in Atlantic and Gloucester counties are expanding rapidly. Asparagus now covers thousands of acres of south Jersey farm

land once either unused or devoted to other crops.

This is an age of agricultural specialization, and in specializing, New Jersey has cut several niches in the national agricultural pattern. New Jersey ranks first in harvesting blueberries, eggplant and peppers; first in early summer cabbage, in late spring lettuce, in late spring asparagus, in early summer cucumbers and in intermediate white potatoes. New Jersey ranks first in production per acre of sweet corn and sweet potatoes.

Overall, New Jersey commercial truck vegetable crops rank fifth nationally. Tomatoes for commercial processing rank third, lima beans third, beets sixth, lettuce eighth, spinach fourth, and so on down the vegetable list. So important is the lettuce from the broad fields of Cumberland County that California growers hold back their lettuce cutting in deference to New Jersey.

Ranking New Jersey counties against other United States counties is revealing: Monmouth ranks 66th



Jersey tomatoes for commercial processing rank third nationally and here's scene as workers load truck on Burlington County farm. **BELOW:** Hunterdon County farmer plowing hillside is typical of New Jersey's 25,000 farmers who stay in business out of love of land.



These dairy cows in Sussex County are part of a huge New Jersey herd which includes Guernseys, Holsteins and Brown Swiss cows. **BELOW:** Tree fruits—apples and peaches—have an annual turnover of \$10,000,000 in Monmouth, Burlington and Gloucester counties.



nationally among all counties in value of farm products sold; Sussex ranks 38th in value of milk products sold; Monmouth ranks third, Ocean fourth, Cumberland eighth and Hunterdon ninth in egg sales; Cumberland ranks ninth in value of vegetables sold; Gloucester ranks eighth and Salem ninth in tomatoes harvested for sale; Monmouth, Burlington and Gloucester all rank high nationally in apples and peaches; in total, New Jersey peaches are seventh and apples are tenth in volume in the United States.

These rankings assume greater importance by reiterating that these New Jersey counties are only dots on a map compared with counties west of the Mississippi. There can be no questioning the vitality of New Jersey farmers who operate in the midst of the highest land costs, the highest taxes and the highest labor rates in the nation—and possibly in the world.

Paradoxically, the very thing which makes land, taxes and wages high also enables farmers to keep up the struggle. That thing, of course, is a highly

concentrated population, where many mouths means the most desirable markets in the world—New York and Philadelphia. Competition to feed those mouths is keen and the New Jersey farmer must beat his competitors from coast to coast by being first on the scene as each new crop comes into market.

MERE geographical closeness can't corner the market, though, in this day of rapid transportation and refrigeration; the prime problem of the New

Jersey farmer at midcentury, therefore, is marketing. That means more cooperative selling, better packaging, better consumer values, better advertising, better trucking to market. The New Jersey farmer must get higher prices for his produce to keep from succumbing to the wiles of real estate men—and that means his vegetables must be crisper, his eggs fresher, his peaches juicier than those of his competition.

Production is no longer the major
(Continued on following Page)

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Only constant improvement of farming methods keeps the Garden State farmer in business and here's a tractor pilot operating a weed burner in Morris County.

(Cont'd from Preceding Page)

worry of the New Jersey farmer (over and above such ravages of nature as drought and hurricane, that is). He grows four ears of corn where one grew before, gets two eggs laid for every one laid 30 years ago, gets more milk from a cow than her great-grandmother dreamed possible. Over-all, New Jersey farm production is up a whopping 50 per cent over 1939. But many a farmer is aware that he has concentrated so much on growing two where one grew before, that all too often he still rides along with marketing practices designed to sell only the one.

THOSE of us who consume rather than produce might well question some prices paid over the counter for farm produce—and might well ponder the wisdom of federal subsidies paid farmers at the expense of the rest of us. In that the average New Jersey farmer joins, since he also is basically a consumer. The fruit and vegetable peddler comes to the doors of most dairy farms. The vegetable farmer generally buys his eggs and milk and processed food. The day of the all-purpose farm has passed; the farmer's wife spends as much in the food supermarket as any white-collar man's wife.

Federal subsidies hit New Jersey farmers hard, too, since their feed bill adds up to more than 80 million dollars annually—and a good bit of that is occasioned by farm price supports paid grain growers of the West. It comes as a matter of surprise to learn that only about 2 per cent of the average New Jersey farmer's income comes from governmental subsidy. Such subsidy as comes to Jersey farmers is almost entirely

FARMING IN NEW JERSEY

for such programs as soil enrichment—scarcely unsound governmental expenditures.

Nevertheless, 25,000 New Jersey farms stay in business—out of the love of the land, out of love of what the land can bring. Together they combine to make the state important in the national scene all out of importance to its minute size.

HERE in New Jersey, for example, is the world's largest herd of purebred Guernsey cattle, the nation's finest herd of Brown Swiss cows and many of the finest Holstein and Jersey cattle in America. Here in New Jersey is produced the certified tomato seed which accounts for 75 per cent of all tomatoes grown commercially east of the Mississippi. Here in New Jersey is the center of the most intensive peach tree research the country has ever known. Here in New Jersey a Burlington County woman brought into being the world's first cultivated blueberries.

No state surpasses New Jersey in the use of electricity down on the farms. Probably no farm area is more mechanized, either, and to point that up, consider that many 10 to 20-acre vegetable farms in northeast Jersey have three or four tractors apiece—a tractor-per-acre ration said to be unheard of elsewhere. Electricity and machinery keep the New Jersey farmer solvent by giving him the means to produce with one

man what 5 to 10 men couldn't produce at the turn of the century.

THUS, with limited manpower, New Jersey farmers account for fabulous quantities of agricultural goods. Each year they hatch 40 million baby chicks, produce nearly three billion eggs, harvest a billion and a half pounds of truck garden vegetables, pick two million bushels of peaches, produce 600 million quarts of milk, pluck eight million quarts of strawberries. That's variety, and only a part of total state production—and for further variety in a minor key, note that New Jersey farmers each year sell a million pounds of honey and a million and a half pounds of dandelion greens.

Agriculture is literally everywhere in New Jersey—quite obviously on the handsome green slopes upstate and on the broad fertile flatlands of south Jersey. Less obviously, it thrives in the shadows of the cities; Newark and Elizabeth, for example, both have dairy concerns within city limits. Turkeys gobble in pens in west Essex and several individuals sell upward of \$100,000 of their own farm eggs annually within 10 miles of Newark. Agriculture is far from dead in such intensely industrial counties as Essex, Union, Bergen and Passaic.

Rather, those urban farmers struggling against the day when home builders or industry will push them away symbolize the fact that agriculture is to be found in countless ways in nearly every corner of this little state. Truly is Ceres justified in holding her full cornucopia on the Great Seal of the State of New Jersey. Truly, this is The Garden State.

NEXT SUNDAY: The State Department of Agriculture.



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